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THE

SABBATH QUESTION.

BY

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“No human authority can, in any case whatever, control or  
interfere with the rights of conscience.”—CONSTITUTION OF  
PENNSYLVANIA.  
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THE SABBATH QUESTION.

According to the theory of our government in this country, both State and National, perfect religious freedom is the inalienable birthright of all. No one can be required by law to adopt any creed or religious observance, however true or morally binding, in the opinion of others, or even in reality; but in all such matters his own conscience is, under God, each individual's own law-giver and judge. The quotation on the title page, from the Pennsylvania Constitution, is professedly regarded as a self-evident truth, and one of most vital importance.

But the practice does not always agree with the theory. Every legislature in the Union interferes more or less with the rights of conscience, and that in various ways. Their Sabbatical statutes are glaring instances of such interference. They have

no more right to require the observance of the first day of the week as a Sabbath, and forbid labor and intrinsically innocent recreation on that day, than to command family prayer, or compel membership of a church, or forbid the teaching of any doctrines but those of the majority. The Jew and the Seventh day Baptist, who feel bound to rest on the last day of the week, may justly complain if they are forced to be idle on the first also, and are thus robbed of one-sixth of their working time, because they conscientiously obey the *only* Sabbath law recorded in the Bible. And they who "esteem every day alike," and believe in pervading all their employments with that true and spiritual worship which the Father seeks, have as full a right to enjoy, and live out unmolested, their convictions, as have those who, clinging to a more formal dispensation, still go up to their Jerusalem temples, and, like the "foolish Galatians" whom Paul rebuked so sharply, "observe days and months, and times and years."

Every statute, therefore, which exacts conformity to the faith or usage of the ma-

jority in relation to the holiness and holy-keeping of a particular day, plainly violates the rights of the minority:—nay, of the majority too; for human legislation in religious matters as truly invades the rights of conscience, when it enjoins what we consider our duty, as when it requires the opposite. It has no right to command *any* religious observance, right or wrong. It would be as truly guilty of usurpation in enjoining immersion upon a Baptist, as upon a Quaker; or auricular confession upon a Roman Catholic, as upon a Presbyterian. Thus they who urge the enactment, or oppose the repeal, of statutes for Sabbath-keeping, are extremely shortsighted; and without perceiving it, are fastening on themselves the fetters forged for others. Even if they should never change their position in relation to this particular case, so as to *feel* the iron entering their souls, they have established a precedent which may some day be applied to other cases, where it *will* bear heavily upon them.

It may perhaps be replied, that labor and

recreation on the first day of the week are forbidden, not to compel a religious observance of the day, but that those who choose to keep it holy may be undisturbed by the din and bustle of every day occupations going on around them, and enjoy the quiet so favorable to devotional thoughts and exercises.

I answer, granting such a season of quiet to be desirable for such purposes, is it any more so during the devotions of the first than of any other day? Yet who would ask the prohibition of all labor and diversion, on the hours of daily private and family devotion, or of social prayer meetings, religious lectures, "protracted meetings," &c., which often fill up no inconsiderable portion of what is called "secular time?" If a general rest from the common business of life is not needed—as none pretend it is—to make these seasons spiritually profitable to those attending on them, why need it be enjoined on the first day of the week? especially when, *without* any injunction, it would far more generally take place on that,

than on any other day. Besides, if such a general rest on the special day of worship were necessary, or so desirable as to justify its legislative enforcement, this would not prove the right of some sects to peculiar privileges in regard to it. The keepers of the first day are no more entitled to protection from the annoyance of worldly occupations in their holy time, than the Jew and the Seventh day Baptists in theirs, and the Friends at that of their regular week day meeting. If either class must have a protective law, all should ; for the same reason applies to all.

The difficulty is not removed by saying that the first day of the week is the divinely appointed Christian Sabbath, which the other days alluded to are not ; for that brings up a question beyond the jurisdiction of the Legislature. Though if this were not so, still, another objection equally fatal would meet the present enactments on the subject. No proof can be shown that the first day of the week is the Christian Sabbath : or that God now requires any day to

be kept more holy than every other; or forbids labor or recreations, in themselves harmless, on any day; or would have the slightest distinction made among the days of the week. Perhaps no doctrine ever found place in any professedly Christian creed, with less authority or even shadow of a warrant from Scripture, than this of the first-day Sabbath. To say nothing of the weight of testimony against it, the utter want of evidence in its favor is reason enough for its rejection.

The Bible teaches that the Sabbath was peculiarly a Jewish institution, and nowhere enjoins its observance upon any but Israelites. Even for them, it is treated as a part of that "shadow of things to come" which was to vanish at the coming of Christ. Attempts have indeed been made to fix its origin at the creation, so that its perpetuity and universal obligation may be inferred; but no proof of its existence before the Israelites left Egypt, has ever been produced. Genesis 2: 3, sometimes quoted as evidence of an earlier origin, is no command;

it specifies no act to be done or omitted, nor tells us *when* or *how* the seventh day was blessed and sanctified. It simply assigns the Creator's resting on that day as a reason for its sanctification, whenever it did take place. If a historian of New England should add, after an account of the landing of the pilgrims, that this is the reason why the 22nd of December is celebrated by their posterity, no reader would understand him as saying that the celebration was instituted on the very day of their landing, or is observed by all their descendants. So neither can we infer the institution of a Sabbath at the creation, from the incidental remark of Moses, that for the weekly rest which his nation was to observe in remembrance of their resting from the service of Egyptian task-masters, the seventh day was chosen because in it God "rested from his work." Archbishop Whately, said to be "one of the first scholars and soundest thinkers in Great Britain," says that "as Moses was writing to the Israelites, who were charged to keep the Sabbath, he would

naturally, when recording the creation in six days, advert to the day which *they* observed in commemoration of it, even had there never been any such observance till the delivery of the law from Sinai." Wood, in his Bible Dictionary, states that the modern Jews boast of the Sabbath "as their spouse, given to them before any other nation."

And as the Bible contains no Sabbath laws older than the time of Moses, so, too, it gives no *example* of Sabbath keeping at an earlier day. In the words of the late Bishop White, of Philadelphia, "*certain it is that we meet with no instance of an actual hallowing of the Sabbath, until we reach the 16th chapter of Exodus. * * * * That it had been observed by the Patriarchs, there is not a hint in their history.*" Justin Martyr, Irenius, Tertullian, and Eusebius, the celebrated historians of the church, all express the opinion that it was not kept before Moses. A compilation made, as Horne states in his Introduction to the Bible, "from *the best interpreters, ancient and modern,*" speaks

of Genesis 2: 3, as referring "to a law not enacted till some ages afterward;" cites Ezek. 20: 12—20, as a proof of its Mosaic origin, and "that the patriarchs were not obliged thereby, nor did practice it;" and says that "in all the writings of Moses before the commencement of the Hebrew polity, there is not so much as the most distant hint of a Sabbath observed or known." The learned Selden, in a work of extensive and diligent research, said, by the Bishop of Lincoln, to contain "all that can be found on the subject of the institution of the Sabbath," testifies that no trace of it can be found among the early Gentile nations, and that the Jewish writers maintain that it is not binding upon the Gentiles.

To all this may be added the testimony of the Bible itself. In Deut. 5: Moses recites the ten commandments—of course including the Sabbath law of the fourth—calling them God's covenant with Israel; and says of them, in verse 3d, "*the Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us who are all of us here alive*

this day." And in Nehemiah 9: 13, 14, it is said, "thou camest down upon Mount Sinai, and madest known unto them (the Israelites) thy Holy Sabbath;" clearly implying that it was not known till then. The circumstances, too, of its announcement in the wilderness, as recited Ex. 16: 23—29, favor the notion that it was then first heard of. Bishop White, alluding to the recital, says that "the manner of the giving and receiving of the institution, carries strong appearances of its not being familiar to the Israelites."

Some have thought that the fourth commandment implies, in the words "*remember the Sabbath day,*" that it was previously known. But Archbishop Whately very justly says that this expression "does not necessarily imply its having been *before* observed; but, rather, that the precept was one liable to be violated through negligence and *forgetfulness*. We even say in like manner '*remember to call at such a place,*' or '*remember to deliver this letter,*' meaning take care not to forget it. It is not said

accordingly, ‘remember not to steal;’ remember to honor your parents,’ &c.; though certainly these precepts must have been always in force; but they are such as no one is likely to violate through forgetfulness.”

The reasons assigned for its institution, also go to prove that it was meant to be peculiar to the Israelites. It was to be a sign between God and them. In Exodus 31: 13, Moses is bidden to say to them, “verily my Sabbath shall ye keep, for *it is a sign between me and you*, throughout your generations, that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.” And in 16: 17, “Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath * * * throughout their generations for a perpetual covenant. *It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever.*” In Ezekiel 20: 12, the same testimony is repeated, “I gave them my Sabbaths, *to be a sign between me and them.*” In Deuteronomy 5: 15, it is enjoined as a memorial of their deliverance from Egypt, “Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God

brought thee out of thence, through a mighty hand, *therefore* the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day." Now, as Paley well remarks upon these texts, "it does not seem easy to understand how the Sabbath could be a *sign* between God and *the people of Israel*, unless the observance of it was peculiar to that people, and designed to be so."

Thus it appears that the sabbatical law was enacted for the Jews alone, and, of course, that it has shared the fate of whatever else was peculiar to their code, or rather, of their whole code as such. As it was never binding on the Gentiles, so now, since the making of a "new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, *not according to* the covenant made with their fathers," when they came out of Egypt, (Heb. 8: 8, 9,) the Jews are also free from its obligation. The New Testament plainly teaches the utter abrogation of the Mosaic law.

"The priesthood being changed" by the rising of "a high priest for ever, after the

order of Melchisedec," Paul tells us, "there is made of necessity a change of the law." Heb. 7: 12. And again, in verse 18th, "there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof." In Galatians 3: 19, we are told that "the law was added because of transgressions, *till* the seed (Christ) should come to whom the promise was made." In verses 24, 25, that "the law was our school-master, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith; but after that faith is come we are *no longer under* a school-master." In Romans 7: 6, that "now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." If, then, the Mosaic law is changed, annulled, dead, its sabbatical ordinances cannot now be in force, even for the Jews; still less, if less could be, for the Gentiles, whom they *never* bound.

To this reasoning it is commonly replied that only the ceremonial part of the Mosaic code is abolished; not its moral precepts. But

this distinction, if admitted, will not save the sabbatical law, for that belongs to the abrogated part. It is not a *moral* precept, but a mere positive ordinance ; for Sabbath-keeping is not a duty in itself, before any express command ; it only becomes one by being commanded. As Paley well says, “the distinction of the Sabbath is in its nature as much a positive *ceremonial* institution as that of many other seasons appointed by the Levitical law to be kept holy, and to be observed by a strict rest ; as the first and seventh days of unleavened bread, the feast of Pentecost, the feast of tabernacles ; and in the 23d chapter of Exodus, the Sabbath and these are recited together.”

The “ compilation from the best interpreters,” above quoted, speaks of the Sabbath law “as different from” the precepts which were “of moral obligation,” and as “founded on no obligation antecedent to the law-giver’s will ;” and adds, “that a seventh day should be assigned, and a total cessation from labor observed, is plainly of positive, *ritual* institution, obligatory *only* upon

the Jews, to whom it made part of their ceremonial law."

Archbishop Whately holds the same opinion, and contends that if we admit the authority of this ordinance, "we are debtors to keep the whole law, ceremonial as well as moral."

The celebrated Bishop Warburton, in his "Divine Legation of Moses," declares that "there is the same authority for circumcision derived from the Mosaic law, as there is for the continuance of the Sabbath."

In the letter written to Antioch, from the Apostles and the church at Jerusalem touching the observance of Jewish ordinances by the Gentile Christians, they say, "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;" among which the Sabbath is not named. Would they have left it out, if they had regarded it as part of the moral law? And Paul, in teaching the abrogation of the Mosaic code, makes no exception in favor of the Sabbath;—nay, more, he expressly includes it among the ordinances

which are blotted out and no longer binding. He rebukes the Galatians for turning again "to the weak and beggarly elements," and is afraid that he had "bestowed upon" them "labor in vain," because they observed "days and months and times and years." Gal. 4: 9—11. But he could not have feared it for this reason, unless he had labored to dissuade them from such observances. In his letter to the Romans he implies most clearly that no day is peculiarly sacred, and that whether the observance of days is a duty or not, depends wholly on the dictates of each one's own conscience. "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Rom. 14: 5. Could he have spoken thus if he had regarded Sabbath keeping as a Christian duty, universally binding? To the Colossians, after telling them of Christ's "blotting out the hand writing of ordinances that was against us," he adds, by way of practical inference, "let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a

holy day, or of the new moon, or of *the Sabbath* days ; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." Col. 2: 16, 17.

Sabbatarians, I know, are wont to reply that these texts refer to the other holy rest-days of the Jews, some of which are called Sabbaths, and not to the weekly Sabbath enjoined in the fourth commandment. That precept being a part of the decalogue, which, say they, is a summary of the moral law, is also like the other nine, moral rather than ceremonial, and of course always and everywhere in force. But this is sheer assumption. Paul nowhere hints at any such distinction between the decalogue, and the rest of the Mosaic code, nor is there any such in the nature of their respective requirements. The decalogue enjoins some moral duties ; i. e. things *in themselves* obligatory ; and so do other parts of the law of Moses. This no more proves all the ten commandments to be everywhere and always binding, than it proves the whole Jewish code to be so. That the Sabbath is not of moral obligation

in its nature, has been shown already ; that it cannot become moral by being enjoined in the decalogue, is self-evident ; since the very meaning of moral obligation is, that which is binding without any positive command.

Moreover Paul as distinctly teaches the abrogation of the decalogue, as he does that of any ceremonial statute. "It cannot be denied," as Archbishop Whately truly says, "that he does speak frequently and strongly of the termination of the Mosaic law, and of the exemption of Christians from its obligations, without ever limiting and qualifying the assertion,—without even hinting at a distinction between one part which is abrogated, and another which remains in full force." That he cannot mean the ceremonial law alone, Whately farther argues, from his making, in the very passages in question, "such allusions to sin as evidently show that he had the *moral* law in his mind ; as where he says, 'the law was added because of transgression,' " &c. ; from his always inculcating "the necessity of moral conduct

on some *different* ground," and not "by declaring that part of the law continued to be binding; for instance, 'what shall we say then? shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid?' He does not then add that a part of the Mosaic law remains in force; but urges this consideration, 'How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein? * * * * *

And again, 'Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? God forbid!'

* * * * * 'Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.'

And such also is his tone in every passage relating to the same subject." The law from which, in Rom. 7: 6, he says "we are delivered," it "being *dead*," manifestly includes the ten commandments; for in verse 7th he quotes one of them, "thou shalt not covet," as part of it. So, too, it is plain from a comparison of Heb. 8: 9—13, with Deut. 5: 2—21, and Ex. 24: 28, that they are referred to as the old covenant which "decayeth" and "is ready to vanish away."

In 2 Cor. 3: 7—13, the law which is there

called "a ministration of death," verse 7; and is said to be "done away," 7—11; and "abolished," 13, is clearly identified as the decalogue, by the mention of its being "engraven on stones," and by the allusion to the shining of Moses's face when he brought it to the people. Ex. 34: 29, records the shining of his face in connection with the giving of the ten commandments; and no other part of the Mosaic law is ever spoken of as written on stones.

Thus, according to Paul, the whole of that law is abolished, *not excepting the ten commandments*. This by no means gives us a license to do the essentially wrong acts forbidden by the law, but releases us only from its positive ordinances; for, in the words of Whately, "the natural distinctions of right and wrong remain where they were. Not having been introduced by the Mosaic law, they cannot be overthrown by its removal; any more than the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem implied the destruction of Mount Zion whereon it was built." Neither, as the same author argues, does exemption

from this law "leave men without a moral guide, since, after all, the light of reason is that which every man *must* be left, in the interpretation of that very law." For, as Moses has not told us which of his precepts are moral and which are ceremonial, that point must be determined by our own consciences. So far, consequently, from the moral precepts of the law being, to the Christian, necessary as a guide to his judgment in determining *what* is right and wrong, on the contrary, this moral judgment is necessary to determine what *are* the *moral* precepts of Moses. Thus we are brought to the conclusion, so clearly stated by this able writer, that, "on the one hand, the Mosaic law was limited both to the nation of the Israelites, and to the period before the gospel; but on the other hand, that the natural principles of morality, which among other things it inculcates, are from their own character of universal obligation;" not *because* they are inculcated in the Mosaic law, "but because they *are* moral." And as the keeping of one day in seven as holy time is not

required by the natural principles of morality, and the positive Mosaic institution is no longer in force, nothing less than an express gospel mandate can make it binding upon Christians.

But the New Testament will be searched in vain for any such mandate, or the slightest proof that Jesus or his apostles ever taught or even hinted that Sabbath-keeping is a duty, or Sabbath-breaking a sin. In all the apostolic writings, the Sabbath is *only once* named in connection with *any* intimation of the duty of Christians concerning it, and that is "let no man judge you in respect of * * * * * the Sabbath days, which are *a shadow* of things to come," Col. 2: 16, 17. If any where it is alluded to without being named—as for instance, perhaps, in Rom. 14: 5, and Gal. 4: 10, 11—it is *uniformly* in such a way as to show that its observance is not required. That Jesus *ever* kept it, the Bible gives no proof; that he repeatedly broke it, and justified its breach by others, is undeniably certain. Both in word and practice he treated it as not be-

longing to the moral law, nor binding upon his disciples. When the Pharisees condemned them for doing what was unlawful, in plucking the ears of corn, as they went through the fields on the Sabbath day, he defended their act, not as unforbidden by the Mosaic law, but as analogous to David's breach of an unquestionably ritual precept, and to certain well known instances of Sabbath-profanation, confessedly blameless by reason of the circumstances; thus showing that the Sabbath also was merely ritual, and its obligation a thing of circumstance. Matt. 12: 1—5. By adding, in verse 7th, "if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless," he intimated, most clearly, its ceremonial character, contrasted it with moral duties, and showed that its violation was no sin. This claim, in verse 8th, that "the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day"—*i. e.*, has the right to change, suspend, or abrogate it—implies no less strongly that it is only a *positive* ordinance, and not of *moral* obliga-

tion. For a moral precept cannot be altered or repealed.

In Mark 2: 27, Jesus is related to have said, on this occasion, "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." The Sabbatarians have strangely misconstrued this passage, in using it to prove the Sabbath law perpetual, and universally binding. Not only the context, but the latter clause of the text itself, plainly forbids such an interpretation. Jesus was opposing an attempt, not to limit the ordinance, but to enforce it strictly. He said the Sabbath was made for man, not in distinction from its being made for a particular nation or age, but in denial of its paramount authority over man; its claim to be an end rather than a means. His doctrine evidently was, the Sabbath is a means, to be used *as* it may be found useful, not otherwise; *while* it continues to be useful, no longer. It has no peculiar sacredness which should save it from violation, when to keep it will not add to man's comfort or welfare. When he healed the cripple at the pool of Bethesda

on the Sabbath, John 5: 8, he commanded him to take up his bed and walk ; in open violation of the injunction to “bear *no burden* on the Sabbath day.” Jer. 17: 21. And to the persecution of the Jews, who sought to slay him, for this profanation of their holy time, his only answer was “my Father worketh hitherto, and I work ;” or, as Whately says, it should be rendered, “my Father has been working up to this time,” &c. ; “the process of vegetation, the motions of the heavenly bodies, and all the other works of God, going on without intermission on the Sabbath.” In the cure of the blind man, John 9, Jesus not only chose the Sabbath for his work, “but instead of merely speaking the word, he *made clay* and *anointed* the man’s eyes, as if on purpose to draw attention to his doing a *work* on that day.” Luke 14 records another act of his, such as Sabbatarians now call sinful. He visited on the Sabbath with what seems to have been a large party of invited guests, at a sumptuous feast ; for we read that they who were bidden chose out the chief rooms : and

though this rivalry was rebuked, it is not intimated that inviting such a company on that day was wrong.

To this testimony of the words and acts of Jesus, and the writings of his apostles, may be added the practice of the early Christians. W. L. Fisher, in his valuable little work on the History of the Sabbath, quotes Eusebius, as saying in so many words, that "the early Christians kept no Sabbaths," and adds, that "they appear to have been in the habit of assembling together for religious purposes, without regard to days; often, in the very early morning, and after sunset, apparently to give the laboring class of the community an opportunity to attend, without interrupting their usual occupations." He refers to "Cave's Primitive Christianity," "Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History," and "Pliny's Letter's to Trajan," as authorities for this statement. He also quotes Justin Martyr, as replying to Trypho, the Jew, who had reproached the Christians for not keeping the Sabbath;—"Do you not see that the elements

are never idle, nor keep Sabbaths? Continue as you were created, for if there was no need of circumcision before Abraham, nor of the observance of the Sabbath, and festivals, and oblations before Moses, neither now is there likewise after Christ." "If any among you is guilty of perjury or fraud, let him cease from these crimes ; if he is an adulterer, let him repent, and he will have kept the kind of Sabbath pleasing to God." So palpable an admission of Trypho's charge, would not have been made, surely, if it had been false. That secular enjoyments on the day now called the Christian Sabbath, were not thought sinful in the first ages of the church, may be fairly inferred from Constantine's edict for the observance of the day. It requires the judges, townspeople, and tradesmen to rest "on the venerable day of the sun," but leaves the country people free "to attend to the business of agriculture, because it often happens that no other day is so fit for sowing corn," &c., "lest the critical moment being let slip, men

should lose the commodities granted by the Providence of Heaven."

In an appendix to a life of Martin Luther, published in this country, (by a Lutheran clergyman, I believe,) nearly thirty years ago, and professing to give the opinions of Luther and the church he founded, touching various matters, it is said that "the solemn celebration of the Sabbath takes *its first date* from the time of Constantine." Whately says that "numerous early Christian fathers, in their commentaries on the Decalogue, describe the Jewish Sabbath as corresponding, in the analogous scheme of Christianity, not so much to the Lord's day, as to the whole life of the Christian, to his abstinence from all works that may draw off his affections from God, and to his complete dedication of himself to his service." The council of Laodicea, held in A. D. 668, after saying that Christians must not remain idle on the Sabbath, adds "Let them prefer Sunday, and show their respect to that day by abstaining from work *if they choose*." From these and other testimonials which might

be cited, it would seem that the early Christians did not believe in the holiness of particular days, or the duty of Sabbath keeping. Thus it appears that neither Patriarchal usage nor Mosaic law, neither the teaching nor the example of Jesus and his apostles, nor the practice of the primitive church, gives any proof of the perpetuity and universal obligation of the Sabbath; while from several of these sources the evidence is clear that it was a local and temporary institution, no more binding upon us now, than that of circumcision or burnt offerings.

Nay, more, that the original Sabbath law is still in force, is practically denied by those who, in words, most strenuously affirm it; who contend with the greatest zeal for its universal and perpetual obligation, and call loudest for legislative enforcement of its observance. They depart from it in almost every essential particular; keeping *another day in another manner* and for *another reason*, than those set forth in the law. *That* required the seventh day to be kept; they

keep the first, and break the law by working on the seventh. Even on the first day they do things forbidden on the seventh, such as gathering fuel, Num. 15: 32, 35; kindling fires, Ex. 35: 3; preparing food, 16: 5—29; going more than a “Sabbath day’s journey,” (which was not quite a mile,) often riding several miles to church and depriving their servants and horses of the rest enjoined on them, 20: 10, &c. They keep their Sabbath in memory of Christ’s resurrection; the original reason for a Sabbath was God’s resting on the seventh day, Ex. 20: 11, and the reason for its observance by those to whom it was given, was their resting from the toil of Egyptian bondage. Deut. 5: 15. If, then, the original Sabbath law is still in force, our first-day keepers are Sabbath breakers; but if what they keep is the true Christian Sabbath, then the original institution is done away. It is a sheer perversion of language to call that the same, which differs in so many particulars. As well might we say

that the Fourth of July is the same as Christmas.

But, say the Sabbatarians, the first day has been divinely appointed to be kept holy instead of the seventh. The institution is the same, only the day is changed. To this, Henry Grew has well replied, that "to affirm the perpetuity of the original Sabbath and also a change of day, is a contradiction. The *particular day* enters into the essence of the original Sabbath. Another day is another institution." The Sabbatarians argue that "while the reason remains, the law remains." Now, as "the reason—God's having rested on the seventh day—certainly remains, the law for observing *that day* must remain as long as the institution itself." To prove the change, therefore, is to prove one law repealed and another enacted. This needs evidence as strong as that of the first enactment. Where is it found? Not in the New Testament, for it nowhere asserts or implies such a change. It records no act or word of Jesus or his disciples, showing an intent to make it, or a belief that it

ever was made. On the contrary, in several passages, it evidently conflicts with the notion that to the first day has been transferred the sanctity once belonging to the seventh. It relates that both Jesus and his disciples, did, on the first day, what, under the old law, was unlawful on the seventh. The journey of the two disciples, mentioned in Luke 24, was about twenty times as far as was lawful on the Sabbath, and Jesus performed a great part of it with them. Yet this was on the first day. On that day, too, he led eleven apostles to Bethany, twice as far as a Sabbath day's journey, and gave them his farewell blessing; thus coupling that solemn act with a practical denial of the doctrine that the old Sabbatical law is still in force, with only a change of day.

Not the least striking proof against the alleged sanctity of the first day, is the extreme slenderness of the evidence relied on in its favor. From the mention of three or four instances of the disciples' meeting on the first—for what purpose is not distinctly stated—from one instance of Paul's preach-

ing on that day, and from his written direction to some of the churches, that, upon it each member should "lay by him in store" what he could spare for the relief of the saints at Jerusalem, it is inferred that the first day of every week was the stated time of social worship; and *from this inference* it is *inferred* that the day was esteemed holy. But this no more follows, even admitting the usage and its religious purpose, than that the friends of foreign missions regard the first Monday evening of every month as peculiarly holy, because they meet upon it for religious exercises; or that the Quakers so esteem their *two* stated meeting days in in each week. It is said, too, that John "was in the spirit on the Lord's day." Whether that was the first or some other day it does not appear, but if it were the first, this is no proof of its sacredness, or of our duty to keep it as a Sabbath. Jesus, it is further said, was wont, before his death, to attend the synagogue on the seventh day, and after his resurrection, met his disciples for religious purposes on the first only.

But if *their* gathering on that day did not prove it holy in their esteem, neither did *his* meeting with them prove it so in his. And as to his frequenting the synagogue, if that custom gave his authority to Sabbath-keeping, then, by like reasoning, we have apostolic authority for the seventh day Sabbath, under the new dispensation, for Paul's practice was the same. Acts 13: 14; 17: 2; 18: 4. But neither inference is just. Both Paul and Jesus went to preach the gospel, where they knew the people would be assembled, no more implying, thereby, the holiness of the seventh or the first, than of any other day on which they preached.

The whole amount of what is claimed as scriptural evidence of the transfer of the Sabbath to the first day of the week, is now, I believe, before the reader. Its manifest deficiency some have attempted to supply from other sources; seeking proof of apostolic authority for the transfer, in the early practice of the church, and the traditions of the Fathers. But here, too, they fail. Much of the testimony already brought to

show that the primitive Christians thought the old law abolished, will bear on this point also ; and much more might be added, were there space and need. W. L. Fisher—after tracing various ecclesiastical histories, and consulting the writings of the earliest authors in the Christian era, and other works, old and rare, relating to the subject, omitting nothing within his reach—testifies that he found no proof that the first day was regarded as taking the place of the original Sabbath, but that “evidence accumulated” upon him “showing exactly the reverse.” Alluding to an assertion that Justin Martyr, in his apology calls Sunday a holy day, and Eusebius establishes the transfer of the day by Christ himself, he says “these authors say no such thing.” “The same is true, he adds, “of other early authors, referred to as establishing the same point.” The learned Whately says, “not only is there no such apostolic *injunction*, than which nothing less would be sufficient; there is not even any *tradition* of their having made such a change; nay, more, it is even abun-

dantly plain that they made *no* such change." He adds, "if we come down to later ages of the church, we find no allusion to any such tradition, but the contrary is distinctly implied, both in the writings of the early fathers, and in those of the most eminent of the founders of our reformation." John Calvin, in his "Institutes," calls the Sabbath "a shadowy ceremony," to which "Christians ought not to adhere;" declares it "abolished at the advent of Christ," (not transferred to another day,) treats the assembling for religious services on the first day as a matter of mere expediency, and "would not advise an invariable adherence to the septenary number;" affirms that "the substance" whereof the Sabbath was a shadow, "is contained, not in one day, but in the *whole course of our life*; and continues, "thus vanish all the *dreams of false prophets*, who in past ages have infested the people with a Jewish notion, affirming that nothing but the ceremonial part of this commandment, (which according to them is the appointment of the seventh day,) has

been abrogated, but that the moral part, that is, the *observance of one day in seven*, still remains." Martin Luther has for one of his heads of discourse, in his larger catechism, "External observance of the Sabbath does not belong to Christians;" and for another, "Observance of days is not necessary." Coleridge states that Luther said of the Christian day of rest, "Keep it *for its use's sake*, but if any where it is made holy for the mere day's sake, if any one sets up its observance upon a Jewish foundation, then I order you to work on it, to ride on it, to dance on it, to feast on it, to do any thing that shall reprove this encroachment on the Christian spirit and liberty."

The celebrated Augsburg confession of faith, written by Melancthon, from a more compressed statement by Luther, and, after being submitted to the leading reformers, presented to the Augsburg Diet as embodying the doctrines of the reformed church, classes "the Lord's day" with "the pass-over and other similar rites," and says that

those who judge that, by the authority of the church, the observance of the Lord's day has been substituted for that of the Sabbath, as if necessary, greatly err. The Scripture has abrogated the Sabbath, teaching that all Mosaic ceremonies may be omitted since the Gospel has been preached." It gives, also, as one reason why the church appointed "the Lord's day" for the people to assemble, "that men might have an example of Christian liberty, and understand that neither the Sabbath *nor any other day* was now necessary to be observed." Paley says, "a cessation upon the first day of the week from labor, beyond the time of attendance upon public worship, is not intimated in any passage of the New Testament, nor did Christ or his apostles deliver, that we know of, any command to their disciples, for the discontinuance upon that day of the common offices of their profession."

These are a few of many such testimonies, found in the writings of eminent men, and the records of ecclesiastical history, confirm-

ing, so far as such authorities can, the doctrine of these pages, that Christianity makes no distinction in the holiness of days.

But Sabbatarians do not rest on Scripture and tradition alone. They appeal to physiology also, and affirm the need of rest one day in seven, to keep body and mind from wearing out before their time. Now, that man cannot bear unceasing toil is manifestly true; but it by no means follows thence, that just one-seventh is the due proportion of time for repose, or, if it were, that six successive days ought to be given to labor, and one to rest. It is at least an open question, whether a week's labor will not cost more fatigue when crowded into six days, than when spread over seven; whether the alleged need of a seventh day's rest is not created by too much labor in the six; and whether this arrangement does not *induce* the excess out of which grows its supposed necessity. What proof has been or can be given, beyond sheer assumption, that the physiological law is not as well obeyed in shortening the work-time of each

day, as in lessening the number of work-days in the week ?

But granting that physiology enjoins the use of one day in seven to make good the wear of the other six, it cannot require all men to spend it alike. Different circumstances must produce different wants. What would benefit one might harm another. The hand-laborer, fatigued by bodily exertion, and needing rest for limb and muscle, might profitably give the hours to reading, meditation, and hearing important truths which would furnish food for thought. Men of sedentary habits, whose work-day toil is of the mind, would need release from thought to give the brain repose, and manual labor or athletic sports, to counteract the hurtful tendency of long bodily inaction. To those who are shut up in shops and breathe the close air of narrow courts and alleys in the crowded city, a ramble in the fields or a trip on the water might best meet the demands of their condition ; while they whose work is in the open country, would find it pleasant and not injurious to divide

the day between a thronged church and their own domestic sanctuaries.

On another point, too, the argument fails. For aught it proves or tends to prove, the rest-day may be any other day of the week as well as the first, since one will serve for repose as well as another, and each man may choose his own, so that in the varying choices no day would be generally kept. Indeed, some who strenuously assert the duty of Sabbath-keeping *do* take this liberty as to the day. Clergymen, whose calling requires them to work harder on their "sacred" day than any other, sometimes obey the physiological law, they tell us, by resting on the next before or after. Whatever this fact may prove as to the duty of periodical cessation from labor, it is far enough from upholding the sanctity of any particular day. For if one class of men may choose its day, every other has the same right, which defeats the claim of any one day to peculiar holiness.

And even if all these difficulties were overcome, the case is not yet made out.

Be it that we need one day in seven for rest: and that the first day of the week is peculiarly fit, above all others, to be devoted, by all men, to this use. This no more proves it holy time, or establishes the sinfulness of secular employments upon it, or justifies legislative enactments for its observance, than the universal need of sleep, and the manifest fitness of night as the time for sleep, prove that night is holy, that work or play in it is sinful, and that they may be forbidden by statute, without infringing the rights of the people. Any of these points failing, the whole physiological argument fails.

But enough has now been said, to prove that the claim of peculiar sanctity, for one day above another, has no support in Scripture, tradition, or reason; and of course that to require the observance of a particular day, or to forbid any intrinsically harmless occupation thereon, is not only to infringe the rights of conscience, but to prop up a *false creed* by unconstitutional legislation.



